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Letter dated 18 May 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to attach herewith the statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine on the Day of Remembrance of the victims of the Crimean Tatar genocide (see annex).

I would appreciate your having the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 72 (c), and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Volodymyr **Yelchenko**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 18 May 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine on the Day of Remembrance of the victims of the Crimean Tatar genocide

From 18 to 20 May 1944 more than a quarter of a million Crimean Tatars fell victim to Stalin's Union of Soviet Socialist Republics criminal policies. The deportation of Crimean Tatars has become a dark page in world history, a crime of the Soviet system that targeted a series of nations in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Among them were Crimean Tatars, whose children and elderly persons were accused of "treason". But the reality was quite different. In their fight against the Nazis, not only legendary Crimean Tatar servicemen such as Amet-khan Sultan, but also many other Soviet soldiers, Crimean Tatars, fought bravely. Their names are forever enshrined in the glorious pages of the Memory Book of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and World War II warriors.

The pain and suffering of the Crimean Tatars during deportation in 1944 are being repeated 70 years later — during Russia's occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. The occupying Power is falling to Stalinist repression against Crimean Tatars and their leaders, bans the Mejlis as the single supreme representative and executive body of Crimean Tatars, carries out illegal searches and politically motivated persecution of activists, and makes groundless accusations of extremism and terrorism against Crimean Tatars.

The Russian Federation, having occupied the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol in February 2014, aims to squeeze out of the peninsula anyone who publicly condemns the Kremlin's illegal actions, rejects the forced use of Russian passports and attempts to preserve their language and religious and cultural authenticity. These are the principles predominantly respected by the overwhelming majority of Crimean Tatars. The policies enforced by the Russian occupation authorities have led to the following: since the occupation of Crimea more than 20,000 Crimean Tatars have fled their homes and settled in Ukraine's mainland in search of a better life. The Mejlis was forced to relocate its activities to Kyiv.

Ukraine pays tribute to the memory of the victims of the 1944 Crimean Tatar genocide and calls upon the international community to continue to bring political and diplomatic pressure to bear on the Russian occupation authorities to avoid any repetition of the 1944 tragedy, to cease immediately violations of fundamental human rights in Crimea and, eventually, to de-occupy the peninsula and restore Ukraine's territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.